



Patient Safety and Medical Errors—The KP Response!

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“In contrast to the defensiveness of some organizations, Permanente physicians responded positively to the Institute of Medicine report ...”

(Jay Crosson, MD; commentary on page 3.)

In response to the Institute of Medicine’s 1999 report “To Err Is Human: Building a Safer Health System,”¹ this special issue of *The Permanente Journal* presents an excellent compilation of articles on patient safety and medical errors.

I encourage all Permanente physicians and associate providers to read Dr Crosson’s commentary in this issue, “Patient Safety and the Group Practice Advantage.” This is one of the best overviews of the organizational strength of the Kaiser Permanente model I have read in my time with Permanente. His comments underscore the tremendous advantage that our integrated group practice model has in insuring the delivery of high-quality health care to our patients. I hope you will not only read it but also circulate it to your colleagues, and then send it on to your legislators.

In March 2001, the Institute of Medicine published a follow-up report, “Crossing the Quality Chasm,”² which called for definitive action to improve the American health care system. This report concludes that a new health care system should be: 1) *Safe* 2) *Effective* 3) *Patient-centered* 4) *Timely* 5) *Efficient* 6) *Equitable*. As all members of the Permanente family know, these are not new ideas; they have been fundamental principles of KP since its inception! As is true for many other aspects of medical care, when considering how best to decrease medical errors and improve patient safety, KP sets the standard of excellence. Proof again that our integrated, physician-led model provides the best solution as this country seeks answers to the ailments of the US health care system.

As a side comment: In addition to the effort KP as an organization has made in proactively confronting this issue of patient safety, I would like to acknowledge the work of Dr David Lawrence. In the past few years, he has made significant contributions to the national dialogue and championed improvements in patient safety and medical errors well in advance of last year’s Institute of Medicine’s report. Good work Dr Lawrence!

In summary, I agree with Dr Crosson—all of us in the Kaiser Permanente family should take great pride in what this organization has done and plans to do in the area of patient safety. As the nation struggles with the dilemma of how to provide quality care in a complex environment, they don’t have to look very far for a solution. We have the answer. ❖

References

1. Kohn LT, Corrigan JM, Donaldson MS, editors. *To err is human: building a safer health system*. Washington, DC: National Academic Press; 2000.
2. Institute of Medicine, Committee on Quality of Health Care in America. *Crossing the quality chasm: a new health system for the 21st century*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press; 2001.

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Quality of Care

If we had not had quality of care, given the kind of atmosphere we were born in, evolved in, and developed in ... we just could not have survived.

James Vohs, former CEO Kaiser Permanente

This “Moment in History” quote collected by Steve Gilford, KP Historian